

**Thomas Jefferson to William Duane, March 28, 1811,
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Leicester Ford.**

TO WILLIAM DUANE J. MSS.

Monticello, March 28, 1811.

Dear Sir, —I learn with sincere concern, from yours of the 15th received by our last mail, the difficulties into which you are brought by the retirement of particular friends from the accommodations they had been in the habit of yielding you. That one of those you name should have separated from the censor of John Randolph, is consonant with the change of disposition which took place in him at Washington. That the other, far above that bias, should have done so, was not expected. I have ever looked to Mr. Lieper as one of the truest republicans of our country, whose mind, unaffected by personal incidents, pursues its course with a steadiness of which we have rare examples. Looking about for a motive, I have supposed it was to be found in the late arraignments of Mr. Gallatin in your papers. However he might differ from you on that subject, as I do myself, the indulgences in difference of opinion which we all owe to one another, and every one needs for himself, would, I thought, in a mind like his, have prevented such a manifestation of it. I believe Mr. Gallatin to be of a pure integrity, and as zealously devoted to the liberties and interests of our country as its most affectionate native citizen. Of this his courage in Congress in the days of terror, gave proofs which nothing can obliterate from the recollection of those who were witnesses of it. These are probably the opinions of Mr. Lieper, as I believe they are of every man intimately acquainted with Mr. Gallatin. An intercourse, almost daily, of eight years with him, has given me opportunities of knowing his character more thoroughly

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than perhaps any other man living; and I have ascribed the erroneous estimate you have formed of it to the want of that intimate knowledge of him which i possessed. Every one, certainly, must form his judgment on the evidence accessible to himself; and I have no more doubt of the integrity of your convictions than I have of my own.

They are drawn from different materials and different sources of information, more or less perfect, according to our opportunities. The zeal, the disinterestedness, and the abilities with which you have supported the great principles of our revolution, the persecutions you have suffered, and the firmness and independence with which you have suffered them, constitute too strong a claim on the good wishes of every friend of elective government, to be effaced by a solitary case of difference in opinion. Thus I think, and thus I believed my much-esteemed friend Lieper would have thought; and I am the more concerned he does not, as it is so much more in his power to be useful to you than in mine. His residence, and his standing at the great seat of the monied institutions, command a credit with them, which no inhabitant of the country, and of agricultural pursuits only, can have. The two or three banks in our uncommercial State are too distant to have any relations with the farmers of Albemarle. We are persuaded you have not overrated the dispositions of this State to support yourself and your paper. They have felt its services too often to be indifferent in the hour of trial. They are well aware that the days of danger are not yet over. And I am sensible that if there were any means of bringing into concert the good will of the friends of the *Aurora* scattered over this State, they would not deceive your expectations. One month sooner might have found such an opportunity in the assemblage of our legislature in Richmond. But that is now dispersed not to meet again under a twelvemonth. We, here, are but one of a hundred counties, and on consultation with friends of the neighborhood, it is their opinion that if we can find an endorser resident in Richmond, (for that is indispensable,) ten or twelve persons of this county would readily engage, as you suggest, for their \$100 each, and some of them for more. It is believed that the republicans in that city can and will do a great deal more; and perhaps their

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central position may enable them to communicate with other counties. We have written to a distinguished friend to the cause of liberty there to take the lead in the business, as far as concerns that place; and for our own, we are taking measures for obtaining the aid of the bank of the same place. In all this I am nearly a cypher. Forty years of almost constant absence from the State have made me a stranger in it, have left me a solitary tree, from around which the axe of time has felled all the companions of its youth and growth. I have, however, engaged some active and zealous friends to do what I could not. Their personal acquaintance and influence with those now in active life can give effect to their efforts. But our support can be but partial, and far short, both in time and measure, of your difficulties. They will be little more than evidences of our friendship. The truth is that farmers, as we all are, have no command of money. Our necessities are all supplied, either from our farms, or a neighboring store. Our produce, at the end of the year, is delivered to the merchant, and thus the business of the year is done by barter, without the intervention of scarcely a dollar; and thus also we live with a plenty of everything except money. To raise that negotiations and time are requisite. I sincerely wish that greater and prompter effects could have flowed from our good will. On my part, no endeavors or sacrifices shall be withheld. But we are bound down by the laws of our situation.

I do not know whether I am able at present to form a just idea of the situation of our country. If I am, it is such as, during the *bellum omnium in omnia* of Europe, will require the union of all its friends to resist its enemies within and without. If we schismatize on either men or measures, if we do not act in phalanx, as when we rescued it from the satellites of monarchism, I will not say our *party*, the term is false and degrading, but our *nation* will be undone. For the

republicans are the *nation*. Their opponents are but a faction, weak in numbers, but powerful and profuse in the command of money, and backed by a nation, powerful also and profuse in the use of the same means; and the more profuse, in both cases, as the money they thus employ is not their own but their creditors, to be paid off by a bankruptcy,

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which whether it pays a dollar or a shilling in the pound is of little concern with them. The last hope of human liberty in this world rests on us. We ought, for so dear a state to sacrifice every attachment and every enmity. Leave the President free to choose his own coadjutors, to pursue his own measures, and support him and them, even if we think we are wiser than they, honester than they are, or possessing more enlarged information of the state of things. If we move in mass, be it ever so circuitously, we shall attain our object; but if we break into squads, every one pursuing the path he thinks most direct, we become an easy conquest to those who can now barely hold us in check. I repeat again, that we ought not to schismatize on either men or measures. Principles alone can justify that. If we find our government in all its branches rushing headlong, like our predecessors, into the arms of monarchy, if we find them violating our dearest rights, the trial by jury, the freedom of the press, the freedom of opinion, civil or religious, or opening on our peace of mind or personal safety the sluices of terrorism, if we see them raising standing armies, when the absence of all other danger points to these as the sole objects on which they are to be employed, then indeed let us withdraw and call the nation to its tents. But while our functionaries are wise, and honest, and vigilant, let us move compactly under their guidance, and we have nothing to fear. Things may here and there go a little wrong. It is not in their power to prevent it. But all will be right in the end, though not perhaps by the shortest means.

You know, my dear Sir, that this union of republicans has been the constant theme of my exhortations, that I have ever refused to know any subdivisions among them, to take part in any personal differences; and therefore you will not give to the present observations any other than general application. I may sometimes differ in opinion from some of my friends, from those whose views are as pure and sound as my own. I censure none, but do homage to every one's right of opinion. If I have indulged my pen, therefore, a little further than the occasion called for, you will ascribe it to a sermonizing habit, to the anxieties of age, perhaps to its garrulity, or to any other motive rather than the want of the esteem and confidence of which I pray you to accept sincere assurances.

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P. S. Absorbed in a subject more nearly interesting, I had forgotten our book on the heresies of Montesquieu. I sincerely hope the removal of all embarrassment will enable you to go on with it, or so to dispose of it as that our country may have the benefit of the corrections it will administer to public opinion.¹

¹ Jefferson further wrote to Col. William Duane:

“ Monticello, April 30, 1811.

“ Dear Sir,—When I wrote you my letter of March 28, I had great confidence that as much at least could have been done for you as I therein supposed. The friend to whom I confided the business here, and who was and is zealous, had found such readiness in those to whom he spoke, as left no other difficulty than to find the bank responsible. But the *Auroras* which came on while this was in transaction, changed the prospect altogether, and produced a general revulsion of sentiment. The President's popularity is high through this State, and nowhere higher than here. They considered these papers as a denunciation of war against him, and instantly withdrew their offers. I cannot give you a better account of the effect of the same papers in Richmond than by quoting the letter of a friend who there undertook the same office, and with great cordiality. In a letter to me of April 17, he says: ‘Yours of the 15th, in reply to mine of the 10th inst., has been brought to me from the office this instant. On showing it to — the effect of it was to dispose him to tend \$500, and I wrote my letter of the 10th to you in a persuasion produced by that incident, as well as by its effect on my own feelings, that something important might be done for D. in spite of the adverse spirit, or at least distrust, which the equivocal character of his paper has lately excited, equivocal in relation to Mr. Madison. But D.'s three or four last papers contain such paragraphs in relation to Mr. Madison, that even your letter cannot now serve him. The paper is now regarded as an opposition one, and the republicans here have no sympathy with any one who carries opposition colors. Every gentleman who mentions this subject in my hearing, speaks with the warmest resentment against D. Believe me, Sir, it is impossible to do anything for him here now; and any

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further attempts would only disable me from rendering any service to the cause hereafter. I am persuaded that you will see this subject in its true light, and be assured that it is the impracticability of serving him, produced by himself, as well as the violation which I feel it would be of my sentiments for Mr. Madison, that prevents me from proceeding.' The firm, yet modest character of the writer of this letter gives great weight to what he says, and I have thought it best to state it in his own terms, because it will be better evidence to you than any general description I could give of the impression made by your late papers. Indeed I could give none, for going little from home, I cannot personally estimate the public sentiment. The few I see are very unanimous in support of their Executive and legislative functionaries. I have thought it well, too, that you should know exactly the feelings here, because if you get similar information from other respectable portions of the union, it will naturally beget some suspicion in your own mind that finding such a mass of opinion variant from your own, you may be under erroneous impressions, meriting re-examination and consideration. I think an Editor should be independent, that is, of personal influence, and not be moved from his opinions on the mere authority of any individual. But, with respect to the general opinion of the political section with which he habitually accords, his duty seems very like that of a member of Congress. Some of these indeed think that independence requires them to follow always their own opinion, without respect for that of others. This has never been my opinion, nor my practice, when I have been of that or any other body. Differing, on a particular question, from those whom I knew to be of the same political principles with myself, and with whom I generally thought and acted, a consciousness of the fallibility of the human mind, and of my own in particular, with a respect for the accumulated judgment of my friends, has induced me to suspect erroneous impressions in myself, to suppose my own opinion wrong, and to act with them on theirs. The want of this spirit of compromise, or of self-distrust, proudly, but falsely called independence, is what gives the federalists victories which they could never obtain, if these brethren could learn to respect the opinions of their friends more than of their enemies, and prevents many able and honest men from doing all the good they otherwise might do. I state these considerations because they have often quieted my own

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conscience in voting and acting on the judgment of others against my own; and because they may suggest doubts to yourself in the present case. Our Executive and legislative authorities are the choice of the nation, and possess the nation's confidence. They are chosen because they possess it, and the recent elections prove it has not been abated by the attacks which have for some time been kept up. against them. If the measures which have been pursued are approved by the majority, it is the duty of the minority to acquiesce and conform. It is true indeed that dissentients have a right to go over to the minority, and to act with them. But I do not believe your mind has contemplated that course, that it has deliberately viewed the strange company into which it may be led, step by step, unintended and unperceived by itself. The example of John Randolph is a caution to all honest and prudent men, to sacrifice a little of self-confidence, and to go with their friends, although they may sometimes think they are going wrong. After so long a course of steady adherence to the general sentiments of the republicans, it would afflict me sincerely to see you separate from the body, become auxiliary to the enemies of our government, who have to you been the bitterest enemies, who are now chuckling at the prospect of division among us, and, as I am told, are subscribing for your paper. The best indication of error which my experience has tested, is the approbation of the federalists. Their conclusions necessarily follow the false bias of their principles. I claim, however, no right of guiding the conduct of others; but have indulged myself in these observations from the sincere feelings of my heart. Retired from all political interferences I have been induced into this one by a desire, first of being useful to you personally, and next of maintaining the republican ascendancy. Be its effect what it may, I am done with it, and shall look on as an inactive, though not an unfeeling, spectator of what is to ensue. As far as my good will may go, for I can no longer act, I shall adhere to my government executive and legislative, and, as long as they are republican, I shall go with their measures, whether I think them right or wrong; because I know they are honest, and are wiser and better informed than I am. In doing this, however, I shall not give up the friendship of those who differ from me, and who have equal right with myself to shape their own course. In this disposition be assured of my continued esteem and respect.

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"P. S. Be so good as to consider the extract from my friend's letter as confidential, because I have not his permission to make this use of it."

He also wrote to William Wirt:

" Monticello, March 30, 1811.

" Dear Sir,—Mr. Dabney Carr has written to you on the situation of the editor of the *Aurora*, and our desire to support him.

"This paper has unquestionably rendered incalculable services to republicanism through all its struggles with the federalists, and has been the rallying point for the orthodoxy of the whole Union. It was our comfort in the gloomiest days, and is still performing the office of a watchful sentinel. We should be ungrateful to desert him, and unfaithful to our own interests to lose him. Still, I am sensible, and I hope others are so too, that one of his late attacks is as unfounded, as it is injurious to the republican cause. I mean that on Mr. Gallatin, than whom there is no truer man, and who, after the President, is the ark of our safety.

"I have thought it material that the editor should understand that that attack has no part in the motives for what we may do for him: that we do not, thereby, make ourselves partisans against Mr. Gallatin; but while we differ from him on that subject, we retain a just sense of all his other services, and will not be wanting as far as we can aid him.

"For this purpose I have written him the enclosed answer to his letter, which I send for your perusal, on supposition that you concur in the sentiment, and would be unwilling he should misconstrue the service you may be able to render him, as an encouragement to proceed in the mischievous undertaking of writing down Mr. Gallatin. Be so good as to return the paper when read; and to be assured of my sincere and constant attachment and respect."

" Monticello, May 3, 1811.

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“ Dear Sir,—The interest you were so kind as to take, at my request in the case of Duane, and the communication to you of my first letter to him, entitle you to a commission of the second, which will probably be the last. I have ventured to quote your letter in it, without giving your name, and even softening some of its expressions respecting him. It is possible Duane may be reclaimed as to Mr. Madison—but as to Mr. Gallatin, I despair of it. That enmity took its rise from a suspicion that Mr. Gallatin interested himself in the election of their governor, against the views of Duane and his friends. I do not believe Mr. Gallatin meddled in it. I was in conversation with him nearly every day during the contest, and I never heard him express any bias in the case. The ostensible grounds of the attack on Mr. Gallatin, are all either false or futile. 1st. They urge his conversations with John Randolph. But who has revealed these conversations? What evidence have we of them? merely some oracular sentences from J. R., uttered in the heat of declamation, and never stated with all their circumstances. For instance, that a cabinet member informed him there was no cabinet. But Duane himself has always denied there could be a legal one. Besides, the fact was true at that moment, to-wit: early in the session of Congress. I had been absent from Washington from the middle of July to within three weeks of their meeting. During the separation of the members there could be no consultation, and between our return to Washington and the meeting of Congress, there really had arisen nothing requiring general consultation, nothing which could not be done in the ordinary way by consultation between the President and the head of the department to which the matter belonged, which is the way everything is transacted which is not difficult as well as important. Mr. Gallatin might therefore have said this as innocently as truly, and a malignant perversion of it was perfectly within the character of John Randolph. But the story of the two millions. Mr. Gallatin satisfied us that this affirmation of J. R. was as unauthorized as the fact itself was false. It resolves itself, therefore, into his inexplicit letter to a committee of Congress. As to this, my own surmise was that Mr. Gallatin might have used some hypothetical expression in conversing on that subject, which J. R. made a positive one, and he being

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a duellist, and Mr. Gallatin with a wife and children depending on him for their daily subsistence, the latter might wish to avoid collision and insult from such a man.

“But they say he was hostile to me. This is false. I was indebted to nobody for more cordial aid than to Mr. Gallatin; nor could any man more solicitously interest himself in behalf of another than he did of myself. His conversations with Erskine are objected as meddling out of his department. Why then do they not object to Mr. Smith's with Rose? The whole nearly of that negotiation, as far as it was transacted verbally, was by Mr. Smith. The business was in this way explained informally; and, on understandings thus obtained, Mr. Madison and myself shaped our formal proceedings. In fact, the harmony among us was so perfect, that whatever instrument appeared most likely to effect the object was always used without jealousy. Mr. Smith happened to catch Mr. Rose's favour and confidence at once. We perceived that Rose would open himself more frankly to him than to Mr. Madison, and we, therefore, made him the medium of obtaining an understanding of Mr. Rose.

“Mr. Gallatin's support of the bank has, I believe, been disapproved by many. He was not in Congress when that was established, and, therefore, had never committed himself publicly on the constitutionality of that institution, nor do I recollect ever to have heard him declare himself on it. I know he derived immense convenience from it, because they gave the effect of ubiquity to his money wherever deposited. Money in New Orleans or Maine was, at his command and by their agency, transformed in an instant into money in London, in Paris, Amsterdam or Canton. He was therefore cordial to the Bank. I often press him to divide the public deposits among all the respectable banks, being indignant myself at the open hostility of that institution to a government on whose treasures they were fattening. But his repugnance to it prevented my persisting. And, if he was in favour of the Bank—what is the amount of that crime or error in which he had a majority, save one, in each house of Congress as participators? Yet, on these facts endeavours are made to drive from the administration the ablest man, except the President himself, because he is unwilling to part with so able a counsellor. I believe Duane to be a very honest man, and sincerely republican; but his passions are stronger than his prudence, and his personal as

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well as general antipathies render him very intolerant. These traits lead him astray, and require his readers—even those who value him for his steady support of the republican cause, to be on their guard against his occasional aberrations. He is eager for war against England,—hence his abuse of the two last Congresses. But the people wish for peace. The re-election of the same men proves it; and, indeed, war against Bedlam would be just as rational as against Europe, in its present condition of total demoralization. When peace becomes more losing than war, we may prefer the latter on principles of pecuniary calculation. But for us to attempt a war to reform all Europe, and bring them back to principles of morality and a respect for equal rights of nations, would show us to be only maniacs of another character. We should, indeed, have the merit of the good intentions, as well as the folly, of the hero of La Mancha.—But I am getting beyond the object of my letter, and will, therefore, here close it, with assurances of my great esteem and respect.”

“ Monticello, May 3, 1811.

“I have rejoiced to see Ritchie declare himself in favor of the President on the late attack against him, and wish he may do the same as to Mr. Gallatin. I am sure he would if his information was full. I have not an intimacy with him which might justify my writing to him directly, but the enclosed letter to you is put into such a form as might be shown to him, if you think proper to do so. Perhaps the facts stated in it, probably unknown to him, may have some effect. But do in this as you think best. Be so good as to return the letter to Duane, being my only copy, and to be assured of my affectionate esteem and respect.”

He wrote, too, to Madison:

“ Monticello, Apr. 24, 11.

“ Dear Sir,—Yours of the 19th is received. I have carefully examined my letter files from July 1808 to this day, & find among them no such anonymous letter as you mention,

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indeed the strong impression on my memory is that I never received an Anonymous letter from England, or from any other country than our own.

“Certain newspapers are taking a turn which gives me uneasiness. Before I was aware of it, I was led to an interference which tho' from just motives, I should not, at a later moment, have shaped exactly as I did. I cannot therefore repress the desire to communicate it fully to you. On the 24th of March I received a friendly letter from Duane, informing me of the distress into which he had been thrown by his former friends, Lieper & Clay, withdrawing their endorsements for him at the banks; the latter expressly for his attacks on John Randolph, the former without assigning any particular cause: & he concluded by asking whether, in Virginia, where he had been flattered by the support of his paper, 80. gentlemen could not be found, who would advance him their hundred Dollars apiece, to be repaid at short periods. I immediately engaged Mr. Peter Carr here, & Mr. Wirt in Richmond to set the experiment afoot, & one of these engaged a friend in Baltimore to do the same. But I mentioned to these gentlemen that to apprise Duane of the grounds on which we interested ourselves for him, to wit, his past services to the cause of republicanism, & that he might not mistake it as an approbation of his late attacks on Mr. Gallatin, of which we unequivocally disapproved, I would write him a letter. I accordingly wrote him the one now inclosed, which I previously communicated to Messrs. Carr & Wirt. It did not leave this till the 1st of April. The thing was going on hopefully enough, when his papers of the 4th & 8th arrived here, the latter written probably after he had received my letter. The effect at Baltimore I have not learned, but every person who had offered, here or at Richmond to join in aiding him, immediately withdrew, considering him as unequivocally joining the banners of the opposition, federal or factious. I have to give an account of this to Duane, but am waiting, in expectation of an answer to mine of March 26. In that I shall make one effort more to reclaim him from the dominion of his passions, but I expect it will be the last, and as unavailing as the former.

“I could not be satisfied until I informed you of this transaction and must even request you to communicate it to Mr. Gallatin: for altho the just tribute rendered him in the letter was

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certainly never meant to meet his eyes yet it is there, among other things, it must go to him. Ritchie has been under hesitation. His paper of the 16th decides his course as to yourself, and I propose to set him to rights, as to Mr. Gallatin, through a letter to Wirt, in which I shall expose the falsehood or futility of the facts they have harped upon. All this however is confidential to yourself & Mr. Gallatin; because, while I wish to do justice to truth, I wish also to avoid newspaper observation.

“With respect to the opposition threatened, altho it may give some pain, no injury of consequence is to be apprehended. Duane flying off from the government, may, for a little while, throw confusion into our ranks as John Randolph did. But, after a moment of time to reflect & rally, & to see where he is, we shall stand our ground with firmness. A few malcontents will follow him, as they did John Randolph, & perhaps he may carry off some well meaning Anti-Snyderites of Pennsylvania. The federalists will sing Hosannas, & the world will thus know of a truth what they are. This new minority will perhaps bring forward their new favorite, who seems already to have betrayed symptoms of consent. They will blast him in the bud, which will be no misfortune. They will sound the tocsin against the antient dominion, and anti-dominionism may become their rallying point. And it is better that all this should happen two than six years hence.

“Disregarding all this, I am sure you will pursue steadily your own wise plans, that peace, with the great belligerents at least, will be preserved until it becomes more losing than war, & that the total extinction of the national debt, & liberation of our revenues, for defence in war and improvement in peace, will seal your retirement with the blessings of your country. For all this, & for your health & happiness I pray to God fervently.

“P. S. Be so good as to return the inclosed as I have no other copy.”